

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE E-21WASHINGTON POST
16 October 1985**JACK ANDERSON and DALE VAN ATTA**

U.S. Monitors North Korea Terror Ship

While the world was watching the strange saga of the Italian cruise ship pirated by Palestinian terrorists last week, U.S. intelligence was keeping close watch on another ship that has been linked to terrorism.

The ship is the Tong Gon Ae Guk Ho, a sometime merchant ship owned by North Korea, which uses it to support terrorist operations in the Far East. According to our intelligence sources, it is the only merchant ship in the world that has been identified as an engine of state-sponsored terrorism. The fact that it masquerades as a freighter only adds to the ship's sinister reputation.

Early this past summer, the Tong Gon Ae Guk Ho visited Japan, much to the alarm of Defense Intelligence Agency personnel in Tokyo. It dropped anchor in Japan a second time on Aug. 14, remaining there three days.

These two visits led military officials in Hawaii to provide us with details of the terrorist ship's known activities in the last couple of years. Here's what they told us:

The Tong Gon Ae Guk Ho made its first blips on intelligence monitors in 1983, when North Korean commandos planted a bomb at the "Martyrs' Mausoleum" in Rangoon, Burma. The bomb was detonated by radio too early to kill visiting South Korean President Chun Doo Hwan, but 17 members of the South Korean delegation and four Burmese were killed in the blast.

One North Korean commando was killed and two others were captured. At least one of them gave the Burmese a detailed confession.

The assassination squad had been brought to Burma on the Tong Gon Ae Guk Ho. A secret U.S. military intelligence report said "the capture of the North Korean terrorists aborted the merchant ship's exfiltration mission and the ship returned to North Korea in November 1983."

The Tong Gon Ae Guk Ho extended its travels this year with the two trips to Japan. What particularly worried U.S. intelligence was that the crew manifest, obtained by U.S. agents, made it clear that "much of the crew of approximately 31 persons—including most of the key officers—is identical to the crew which participated in the terrorist support voyage in late 1983," the secret report stated.

Summing up the evidence on the Tong Gon Ae Guk Ho, the report made these points:

- The ship has a "previous history of involvement in covert transport of terrorist-related personnel and arms."
- It has a "history of involvement in North Korean agent and smuggling activities in Japan and possibly other Asian countries."
- It has been "equipped with sophisticated communications devices, heavy machine guns, small firearms, grenades, a larger than normal crew and special 'training' facilities."
- The ship has undergone "periodic subordination" to the Korean Communist Party for special operations "while disguised as a trade ship."
- The ship has most likely become "part of the North Korean merchant marine [which] was recently organized into 'suicide squads' in order to become the fourth defensive force of North Korea."